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Near East and South Asia Review

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29 January 1988

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*Page***Articles****Syria: Reaction to Palestinian Unrest in Israeli-Occupied
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Syria maintains that the recent unrest in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip vindicates its hardline position on the Arab-Israeli issue. Damascus has encouraged the unrest by giving it full propaganda support and urging its Palestinian surrogates to do the same. Syria's anti-Palestinian actions in recent year, however, will lessen its effect in the occupied territories.

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Palestinian Terrorism in 1987

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Palestinian terrorist attacks outside the Middle East decreased in 1987, but incidents within Israel and the occupied territories as well as attempted raids into Israel increased. Palestinian activists still believe terrorism is an effective way to focus attention on their grievances and hurt Israel and its supporters.

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(b)(6)**Lebanon: Dany Chamoun's Presidential Aspirations**

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Leader of the National Liberal Party and a perennial presidential candidate, Dany Chamoun is a front-runner among the growing number of presidential hopefuls in Lebanon's September 1988 election. To increase his popular support, Chamoun is developing a political platform and contacts independent of the National Liberal Party.

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(b)(6)**Tunisia: The Fundamental Challenge to Stability**

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Islamic fundamentalism, under the banner of the Islamic Tendency Movement, represents the largest political threat to the government of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. Ben Ali has shown by his initial actions that he intends to implement a more imaginative and effective policy for dealing with the fundamentalists.

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Middle East-South Asian Debt: Manageable but Growing

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Examination of the external debt position of the countries of the Middle East and South Asia reveals broad differences in the magnitude of their financing problems. A steadily growing need for external financing combined with pressure on Western creditors for more generous rescheduling is likely to produce strains in important political relationships.

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Brief**Saudi Arabia: Banning Iranian Religious Pilgrims**

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Publications of Interest

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Lebanon: Dany Chamoun's Presidential Aspirations

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Dany Chamoun, leader of Lebanon's National Liberal Party and a perennial presidential candidate, is a front-runner among the growing number of presidential hopefuls in Lebanon's September 1988 election. In an attempt to emerge from the political shadow cast by his father, former President Camille Chamoun, and widen his base of popular support, Dany Chamoun is developing a political platform and contacts independent of the National Liberal Party.

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Chamoun's path to the presidency will be rife with problems. His hardline Christian attitude and political concessions to the Lebanese Forces militia may make him an unacceptable candidate to most Muslim groups in Lebanon. Chamoun's past anti-Syrian rhetoric also may make him an unacceptable choice to Damascus—which will play a major role in the 1988 election—but his often pro-Israeli stance may win him influential support from Tel Aviv.

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Coming Into His Own

The National Liberal Party, the second largest Maronite party, was founded by Camille Chamoun in 1958. His death in August 1987 removed the most cohesive, driving force behind the party. To broaden his own political appeal and support, Dany Chamoun is attempting to find a more moderate line than the traditional National Liberal Party platform. Dany, Camille's younger son, is expanding his contacts with other Lebanese political factions and expressing his opinion on a wide variety of topics

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Contacts in the Lebanese Dynamic

Chamoun's contacts within the Christian community and with Lebanon's prominent families are well established on both personal and political levels. Fueled by the traditional Gemayel-Chamoun family rivalry, Chamoun has been an outspoken critic of President Gemayel. Chamoun has close access to Acting Prime Minister Salim al-Huss, as well as to other Cabinet members

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Dany Chamoun

President of National Liberal Party . . . inherited leadership from father, Camille Chamoun, in August 1985 . . . former commander of the party's now defunct Tigers militia . . . left Lebanon after defeat of Tigers by Lebanese Forces militia in 1980 . . . returned after election of Bashir Gemayel as president in 1982 . . . 53

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In addition, Chamoun has personal ties to Druze warlord and Cabinet Minister Walid Junblatt, founded on the Chamoun's familial ties to the Druze-controlled Shuf region.

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Among Dany Chamoun's top priorities is improving his carefully cultivated relationship with the militant Lebanese Forces militia. Although not formally involved in the political process, the Lebanese Forces has positioned itself as a powerful performer in this year's election and may play a spoiler role for any candidate acquiescing to Syrian or Muslim demands. The National Liberal Party has been associated with the Lebanese Forces since the start of the civil war in 1976. The party's Tigers militia was forcibly merged into the Lebanese Forces militia by then militia leader Bashir Gemayel, leaving a residue of friction between the two groups.

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We believe Chamoun's courtship of the Lebanese Forces will increase in 1988 as he attempts to calm militia anxieties or challenges to his candidacy caused by a moderating of his political stand.

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Chamoun has publicly championed the Christians' need for the Lebanese Forces militia, especially as an internal security force, and has extolled the virtues of Samir Ja Ja, the leader of the Lebanese Forces, on several

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29 January 1988

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occasions. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Chamoun has been eager to exploit his alliance with the militia both domestically and abroad and has offered to act as an intermediary for contact between the United States and the Lebanese Forces. Chamoun will try hard to convince Ja Ja not to advance his own candidacy but rather rally behind him as a more "compromise" figure.

Chamoun's contacts in the Muslim community are more limited, but it appears that he is trying to open new lines of communication. Chamoun recently [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] instructed an emissary to approach Hizballah spiritual leader Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah with a plan for a Hizballah-Amal agreement to prevent Palestinian and other attacks against Israel in return for an Israeli withdrawal from South Lebanon. Chamoun is not overly optimistic about this plan, but his overtures to Hizballah may indicate a willingness to open other political channels with Shia leaders. The National Liberal Party has traditionally had closer ties to key Shia families than any other Christian party. [REDACTED]

Chamoun has maintained a longstanding relationship with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which facilitates his ties to Lebanon's Sunni Muslims.

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unable to overcome his pro-Israeli image enough to squelch Syrian fears of the latter form of government. In addition, past anti-Syrian statements, such as Chamoun's declaration that Damascus was responsible for Prime Minister Karami's assassination last June, will be difficult—if not impossible—to overcome in courting Syrian support.

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(b)(3)**Outlook**

Although Chamoun is positioning himself to make a serious run for Lebanon's presidency, it is too soon to make a judgment of his chances. Until more information is known on the election plans of such key players as Samir Ja Ja and Syrian President Assad, the field remains wide open. Dany Chamoun has demonstrated a keen awareness of the Syrian and militant Christian roles in the 1988 election and will continue to probe for the elusive political platform needed to pacify opposition to his election.

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Syria—An Overwhelming Obstacle

All of Chamoun's efforts to broaden his support may be for naught if his well-known relationship with Israel makes him anathema to the Syrians. Damascus, whose troops occupy two-thirds of Lebanon, is widely viewed as the major force in this year's election, and any successful candidate will require Syrian acquiescence at a minimum, or more likely, Syrian backing.

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We believe that in this election Damascus wants to prevent the creation of either a hostile fundamentalist Muslim state or a Christian minstate dependent on Israel on its western border. Dany Chamoun may be

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